

2013 February 20th REC Meeting Summary

Dev Quandt, Dan Smet, Wes Ebert, and Steve Schmidt met to discuss the potential order of trees and shrubs from the WI State Nursery. As a registered school forest, the REC is able to obtain shrubs and trees for free from the WI State Nursery, when available.

Due to the problems of over-browsing by deer and invasive species, especially buckthorn, the forest is seeing less than adequate natural regeneration of tree and shrub species. In essence, habitat has been declining for some time due to these problems. Invasive species control has helped. Most mature buckthorn has been removed. Control will now focus on pulling immature plants and monitoring succession of seed-producers for removal each fall.

The over-browsing problem could be helped by reducing the deer herd through harvest, which is currently not allowed. This problem will be studied by building some deer exclosures around a clear cut in the bottomland area once the planned harvest takes place.

NCS has accepted a bid from logger, Cody Bergman. The harvest will either take place this winter or next, depending on the weather. Since much of the harvest is in the bottomland, the ground must be frozen to protect from erosion and run-off. If spring comes soon, then the harvest will occur in winter 2014-15. If harvest is delayed, then the REC committee will need to pull together a team to harvest the diseased red pines this spring.

It was determined at the meeting that our order of trees and shrubs would have two goals. One is to improve species diversity which will contribute to a healthy habitat for various wildlife and give NCS students more opportunities to learn. The second is to control buckthorn by planting shrubs in areas where buckthorn control measures have been taken.

Most of the meeting was spent identifying shrubs and trees to plant in certain target areas at the REC. Target areas were: red pine plantation and open areas just to the south and east of it, the bottomland (middle of REC), and slough that divides the bottomland from 'the island'. The state brochure with trees and shrubs can be found at the following link:

<http://dnr.wi.gov/topic/treeplanting/documents/wisconsinstatenurserycatalog.pdf>

In order to determine which species to plant at each target area, we considered soil moisture, available sunlight, and status of buckthorn. Other considerations were whether or not the species was present at the REC and if it's natural geographic range included Central Wisconsin. The red pine plantation and most of the bottomland area will be significantly impacted by the planned harvest. Trees and shrubs identified for these areas will be ordered following the harvest, with the exception of open areas to the east and south of the red pines. It was agreed that our order **prior to the harvest** would include mainly shrubs and trees that could improve bird habitat, species diversity, and help control buckthorn **(see table below)**. Following the

harvest, we would order mainly trees to improve species diversity around the edge of the bottomland and in the deer exclosures.

S&E of red pines	Slough	Bottomland (edge)	Bottomland clear cut & red pines
highbush cranberry, juneberry, ninebark, sugar maple	red osier dogwood, silky dogwood, highbush cranberry, ninebark, wild plum, tamarack	white cedar, white spruce, black spruce, tamarack, big tooth aspen, basswood	Mostly natural regeneration

Following the meeting, I spoke with Gretchen Marshall, State School Forest Specialist regarding our order. She said that the maximum number of trees is 5000 and shrubs is 3000. We will likely order much less than this for our first order. The order is free. There may be some sold out species which would be unavailable this year. Next year we will order early to ensure availability.

As mentioned earlier, we will likely need to harvest some diseased trees this spring. We will need volunteers to help with this and also to help plant trees and shrubs. I will keep you posted regarding these activities.

If you have any questions or comments regarding these activities, please do not hesitate to contact me at sschmidt@snapshotscience.org or call me at 715-370-2000.

Sincerely,
Steve Schmidt